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ABSTRACT

Following an overview of the Pennsylvania State University Libraries, this paper discusses the role of dual function librarians. The duties and responsibilities of a RISD (Reference and Instructional Services Division) cataloger are listed, and problems of terminology, evaluation, divided loyalties, and inflated expectations are addressed. Positive results of this type of job integration are also noted, including increased communication and understanding between divisions, the feasibility of undertaking projects that require an in-depth knowledge of both divisions, and added insights for the cataloger into how users approach the catalog. It is concluded that, with proper support and planning, this position has the potential of being very beneficial to both the library and the librarian. (7 references) (MES)

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Dual Function Positions: A View From The Trenches

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Abstract

Since the onset of automation in the university library there has been a slow moving trend towards the holistic or dual function librarian. In most cases this is a combination of public and technical service responsibilities, i.e. reference and cataloging in a specific subject area. Along with this position comes new demands on the time and skills of the librarian. Qualifications above the usual are necessary to fully benefit from this type of arrangement. A person must be an efficient time manager, have good oral communication skills, be flexible and have a sense of humor. It is also important for the administration to recognize the problems and concerns of the librarian in this position. A mutual understanding of what is involved will enhance the success of this integration of services.

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University libraries are typically structured with a division between public and technical services units. The onset of automation has made it practical to integrate these two services into one. Under this arrangement division is based on subject rather than function. This subject divisional plan for library organization is an innovation which had its beginnings in the early 1940s when libraries were divided into broad service areas reflecting groups of subjects. Subject specialist librarians had dual assignments, half their time was spent cataloging and the other half in public service. This type of arrangement was gradually abandoned by the libraries that used it. The 1970s and the inception of library automation brought this concept back to the attention of the library world. [1]

As automation continues to grow at its present pace, integration and reorganization of university libraries will become increasingly prevalent. In March of 1986 a survey was conducted by the Association of College and Research Libraries on "Automation and Reorganization of Technical and Public Services." Some of the results include: twenty-five occurences of multiple role positions (this is defined as one individual performing more than two major functions), thirteen libraries reported dual function positions, and four libraries make use of job rotation. [2] The University Libraries at Penn State were one of the thirteen libraries indicating a dual function position.

To fully appreciate the ramifications of the dual function position at Penn State, a brief description of the University Libraries is in order. It is comprised of a central collection (Pattee) and six subject libraries at University Park, and libraries at each of twenty campuses throughout the Commonwealth. Collections include over two million volumes, as well as extensive holdings of maps, microforms, and documents. Serving approximately 63,000 students at all locations, with 35,000 enrolled at University Park, the Libraries have developed an integrated, automated system being used in innovative ways to enhance and complement services. This system is called LIAS which stands for Library Information Access System. This system controls interactive functions like record creation/ maintenance and inventory control, which includes circulation, personal reserve and intra-campus lending. Penn State participates in OCLC, (Online Computer Library Center) RLIN, (Research Libraries Information Network) and PRLC (The Pittsburgh Regional Library Center.)

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[1] Lois M. Pausch, "Reference/Technical Services Cooperation in Library Instruction," The Reference Librarian 10, (Spring/Summer 1984):101-107.

[2] B. J. Busch, "Automation and Reorganization of Technical and Public Services," Spec Flyer 112, (March 1985): 1-5.

The Library at University Park is divided into two major divisions. BRSD (Bibliographic Resources and Services Division) handles technical services, and RISD (Reference and Instructional Services Division) is the public service section. The term RISD Cataloger, among others, is used to describe the dual function librarians at Penn State. There are currently five of these positions, one in each of the following units: Engineering, Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, Special Collections and Documents. A small number of original catalogers are being retained in technical services units where they serve as bibliographic experts.

What are the duties and responsibilities of an RISD cataloger? To name a few: provide reference services; contribute to the development of reference and general collections; present course-related instruction; assist faculty and students in conducting computerized database searches; original cataloging of monographic publications; update bibliographic records requiring classification, subject access or other elements for bibliographic control; master local cataloging or processing policies and practices and maintain awareness of appropriate national or regional developments in bibliographic control; participate in planning and discussion of appropriate issues in both bibliographic access and reference; and engage in regular consultation with fellow catalog librarians on bibliographic matters. [3] In addition to the above, this librarian is expected to participate in activities related to library governance, library-wide efforts to develop systems and services, and devote time to research, scholarly activity, and service to the University and the public.

Most of the material being written today about dual function positions is coming from either the administrative level or those involved in technical services. These articles deal with the management and organizational structure of the library and the benefits to the librarian. Michael Gorman's "On Doing Away with Technical Services Departments" [4] is considered a classic article in this area. He describes the reorganization of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library. Gorman's premise is that libraries of the future should contain groups of librarians formed around services or subjects or languages or combinations of the three. Amy Dykeman of Rutgers University writes that one of the outcomes of this position might be a greater chance of promotion. "... for those academic libraries with tenure requirements, contact with the public (especially with faculty members) and a

[3] The Pennsylvania State University, Statement of Primary Assignment, 1 October 1985.
[4] Michael Gorman, "On Doing Away With Technical Services Departments," American Libraries 10, (July 1979): 635-637.

willingness to try new professional duties are often worthwhile endeavors for promotion considertions." [5] Greater job satisfaction is another common theme in these papers. What is not seen is documentation being written by individuals who actually have one of these positions (maybe they do not have the time.)

One of the problems facing librarians holding this position is what they are called. Speaking from experience here is a partial list of some of terms currently being used: adjunct, reference/cataloger, holistic, renaissance, distributed, integrated, split, dual position and "one of those librarians." This is a minor issue but a vexing one. More important matters are the question of evaluation, divided loyalties and inflated expectations on the part of both the librarian and the rest of the library faculty.

Evaluating a librarian's performance in one area is tricky enough, but how do you evaluate a dual position librarian? Thomas Leonhardt states:

> "Should each supervisor's evaluation be qualified with the statement to the effect that for a half-time cataloger or for a half-time reference librarian the person is doing well? How well is that person cataloging compared to full-time catalog librarians, and not just in quantitative terms? If one area is rated lower than the other for the year, does the person being evaluated neglect, even slightly, the strong area to bring up the other? Have we placed the individual on a teeter-totter that may never be balanced?" [6]

This is an area that needs further investigation. At Penn State the situation is handled by having the librarian evaluated by their RISD (public services) supervisor with input from their RISD (technical services) supervisor. This seems to be work because the assignment is split two-thirds public service and one-third cataloging. Written into the University Libraries Strategic Plan for 1985 was a plan to "assess the success of the adjunct BRSD/RISD positions particularly in the light of obtaining input for collection development and improvement of bibliographic services." [7]

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[5] Amy Dykeman, "Betwixt and Between: Some Thoughts on the Technical Services Librarian Involved in Reference and Bibliographic Instruction," The Reference Librarian, (Spring/Summer 1984): 238.

[6] Thomas W. Leonhardt, "Cataloger/Reference Librarian-The Way to go?" RTSD Newsletter 9,no.3 (1984):28.

[7] The Pennsylvania State University Library, Libraries Strategic Plan, Draft IV, 18 October 1985.

As stated earlier most university libraries are divided into two distinct sections, reference and technical services. These two groups have the tendency to work against each other rather than together. One of the goals of the dual position librarian is to bridge this gap and act as a liason between the two. This can be difficult. When this position first started at Penn State there was a perception of divided loyalties, the librarians did not feel like they really "belonged" to either public or technical services. This was complicated by the fact that most of the first year was spent with the technical services unit undergoing cataloging training. The public service units were unsure of where they stood in all of this. This problem has since been resolved through time. The librarian is a liason between the two divisions and communication has greatly increased between the two groups.

The last issue to consider is that of inflated expectations. The fact is that the dual function librarian is a new position and nobody knows what to expect. This includes both the librarians in the position and the rest of the library faculty. There is the notion that this person can somehow be fulltime, or close to it, in both divisions, and still have time available for research and other professional activities. This is where time management is very important along with the ability to delegate duties. It is not uncommon to have three to four meetings in one day. The librarian and the staff must realize that everything can not be done `today'. Time and experience once again resolve this issue.

There are many positive sides of this type of job integration. Communication and understanding between divisions is increased. Projects that require an in-depth knowledge of both units may be successfully undertaken. It also provides a cataloger with added insights into how users approach the catalog. This in turn may be incorporated into the creation of records and suggestions for online system changes.

In conclusion it may be stated that this position, with the proper support and planning, has the potential of being very beneficial to both the library and the librarian. Comments from people in this situation always mention the overwhelming workload, but quickly add that the great variety and flexibility makes it all worthwhile.